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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (7/17): THE PRISONER RELEASE - "A DAY TO SMILE"

Main Stories:

The Palestinian media carries upbeat coverage of the July 16 prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hizbollah. Coverage dominates all front pages, highlighting that the deal is a clear victory for Hizbollah and Arab parties. The overwhelming theme of the dailies' commentaries and political cartoons is that the deal bodes well for future prisoner releases. Al-Quds leads with a photo of long-time Lebanese prisoner Samir al-Quintar wearing military fatigues during the July 16 official homecoming celebration in Lebanon. Al-Ayyam leads with two photos that span the space above the fold: One showing Nasrallah, next to Quintar, addressing the crowd at the celebration and one showing children attending a rally in Ramallah, dressed in Palestinian colors and holding identical posters of Palestinian "fighter" Al Mughraby and PLO leader Arafat. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida leads with an over-sized photo of Nasrallah making a victory, standing next to Quintar. Both Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida front page smaller photos of Kuntar's step-mother dancing in celebration inside her Gaza home.

Official reactions to the Israel/Hizbollah prisoner exchange deal also appear in the dailies. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas welcomed the release in a statement from Malta where he was on a state visit. Abbas congratulated the families of Quintar and other released prisoners, the papers report. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that the PA confirmed at a July 16 celebration in Ramallah that, "we [Palestinians] will implement the wishes of Dalal Al-Mughraby and all martyrs to be buried in Palestine." EU's Commissioner for External Relations Valdner commented that the deal contributed to regional stability, according to coverage. In related reporting, all dailies note an Al-Qassam Brigades statement asserting that the deal, "proves that resistance is an, active,

effective and best option" when dealing with Israel. The group also insisted that Israeli soldier Shalit will not be released until Israel fulfills their conditions.

The plight of an East Jerusalem family that has been issued eviction orders by Israeli authorities continues to grab front page headlines. All dailies highlight, "a serious development," entailing the July 16 raid by Israeli police of the family's home. Police ordered the family to vacate the house by 9:00am on July 17 despite a planned sit-in by Palestinian, Israeli, and foreign peace activists. The Palestinian Authority President's Office called on international representatives and diplomats to act immediately and take steps, "to prevent the Israeli occupation," from expelling the family.

All dailies headline, "the continuing attack on Nablus" by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Members of the Nablus Municipal Council condemned the "attack" on the West Bank city and the July 16 arrests of two of its members by the IDF.

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Al-Quds reprints an editorial without attribution to the original source (UAE paper Al-Khalil) under the title, "The naivety of betting on Obama" (7/17): "Many Arab writers and political analysts are betting on Obama's victory in the U.S. elections, thinking that if he wins, it will also constitute a victory for them. So they praise him in their articles... because they believe that his victory will bring real change to U.S. foreign policy... as if his success will bring victory especially to the Palestinian and Iraqi causes, and more generally to Arab matters... Whether Obama or

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McCain [wins the elections], the core of U.S. foreign policy will not change, except for a few details."

¶2. Al-Ayyam independent daily prints an editorial by Dr. Abdul Majid Swaylim entitled, "They return..." (7/17): "[Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners] return as if they are the leaders of their people. They left as fighters and now return as heroes and leaders... these days, Israel's self-image is closer to reality than at any time in the past. As a state with the strongest and largest military [in the region]... Israel stares into the mirror for a long time... Israeli leaders are confused whether the [negative] image that they see is accurate or if the mirror needs to be fixed. Very few ask themselves why... they break the mirror when they do not like what they see. Today, we [Palestinians] can also stare into the mirror and smile. Isn't it the time for us to smile a bit?"

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